

# Water Act: Approvals

## Fact sheet

Before taking on any construction activity in a water body in Alberta, an approval under the province's *Water Act* must be obtained.

Approvals are NOT required for:

- Placing, constructing, installing, maintaining, replacing or removing:
  - floating platforms
  - floating marker buoys
  - portable or seasonal piers
  - portable or seasonal boat launches
  - portable or seasonal docks
  - fences in water bodies
- Portable pump installation if there are no significant alterations or disturbances to the water body's bed or shore.
- Beaver dams requiring removal on land owned by the individual.
- Some types of dugouts (see [Water Act: Dugouts Fact Sheet](#)).
- Groundwater exploration to obtain information supporting an application for a licence to divert water.
- Some types of watercourse crossings (contact the department for advice).
- Other activities identified in Schedule 1 of the Water (Ministerial) Regulation.

## How to apply

*Water Act* applications can be submitted electronically through the online application system called DRAS, the [Digital Regulatory Assurance System](#).

Include with the application accurate drawings of the proposed project that show:

- Suitable scale, north arrow, date and location of proposed work in relation to the quarter section boundaries and/or property line.
- Features such as water bodies (indicating flow directions, 100 year floodplain, ordinary high water mark), roads and/or buildings (such as pump houses), water and wastewater conveyance structures (such as ditches and canals including flow directions), etc.

- Location of intake structures, control structures, spillways and/or dams and reservoirs, including cross-sections of structures, dams and reservoirs.
- Proposed construction schedule.

## Complex projects

Depending on the complexity of the project, you may be required to provide a project description that includes construction specifications, operational plans and method of operation.

## Other requirements

Plans may require the professional stamp of an engineer registered with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta.

Where applicable, geotechnical information may be required for dykes and dams, as specified in the *Dam Safety Guidelines 2007* available from the [Canadian Dam Association](#).

If wetlands are to be impacted, a wetland impact assessment may be required indicating how the wetlands may be altered and/or impacted by the proposed activity. Compensation for impacts to wetlands may be required.

## Application Review

Applications are reviewed for:

- Hydraulic, hydrological and hydrogeological effects;
- Effects on the aquatic environment;
- Effects on public safety;
- Effects on nearby approval and licence holders including household and other water use;
- Third-party impacts;
- Existing water management plans; and
- Any other matters the Director considers relevant.

An application may also be referred to other agencies that have interests in the project.

The *Water Act* requires that you place a public notice in appropriate newspapers or post it at specified locations. Alberta Environment and Protected Areas requires resolution of statements of concern received on the proposed project.

## Issuance

The approval is issued to the applicant with conditions attached. The approval holder is given a defined time period in which to construct, maintain and/or operate the project.

In some cases, the approval holder is required to submit a signed Certificate of Completion, which would have been included with the approval, and/or an environmental monitoring report following completion of construction.

## Appeals

Decisions on approvals can be appealed by the applicant and individuals directly affected by an activity who submitted a statement of concern. Appeals are submitted to the Environmental Appeals Board.

## Enforcement

Conducting an activity in a water body in Alberta without an approval or diverting water without a licence may result in enforcement action and a possible fine of up to \$50,000 for an individual and up to \$500,000 for a company or organization.

Anyone who sees a water-related activity that could be illegal should contact the Environmental Emergencies toll free number at 1-800-222-6514.

## References

*Water Act*:

<https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/W03.pdf>

Water (Ministerial) Regulation:

[https://open.alberta.ca/publications/1998\\_205](https://open.alberta.ca/publications/1998_205)

*Water Act*: Dugouts Fact Sheet:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/water-act-dugouts>

Canadian Dam Association:

<https://www.cda.ca/>

Digital Regulatory Assurance System (DRAS):

<https://www.alberta.ca/digital-regulatory-assurance-system.aspx>

## Related information

Shorelands information:

<https://www.alberta.ca/shorelands.aspx>